



Career and Technical Education

Pathways to Success

Career and technical education.

Some say it has outlived its usefulness and should go the way of the slide rule.

Others see career and technical education (CTE) as the way to reform high schools and make education more relevant to students who will live in a global economy.

For many students, CTE is the only thing keeping them in school.

Despite all the statistics predicting a bleak future for high school dropouts, about 30 percent of students nationwide do not finish school.

For minorities, the number is scarier –nearly 50 percent for Hispanics and African-Americans.

While their grandparents – and, perhaps, parents – could find a job and live the “good life” without a high school education, today’s dropouts face an impossible job situation. Whatever low-wage jobs haven’t yet moved overseas are being filled by immigrants willing to work for less.

According to a recent CNN article, dropping out of high school today is to societal health what

smoking is to physical health – it’s an “indicator of a host of poor outcomes to follow, from low lifetime earnings to high incarceration rates to a high likelihood that your children will drop out of high school and start the cycle anew.”

The reasons for dropping out vary, but, according to a poll conducted in California, many students just don’t like school and are not motivated to succeed.

Most of those disaffected students – more than 90 percent – said they would be more motivated to stay in school if they could take classes relevant to a future career.

In Arkansas, CTE builds numerous paths to success – from the trades to business and journalism to culinary arts and cosmetology to health sciences and technology.

The latest statistics show that students who have at least a concentration in a CTE program have a 90 percent graduation rate – compared to an 80 percent graduation rate for all Arkansas high school students.

CTE gives students more op-

tions when they graduate from high school; 60 percent of Arkansas students who complete a CTE program in high school go on to college, 31 percent go straight into the workforce, and 3 percent join the military.

Of those going to college, 66 percent enroll in a four-year college and 34 percent go to a two-year college.

Taking CTE courses does not mean less rigor – 66 percent of the CTE completers also completed college prep courses.

Besides offering students a chance to explore careers and relate coursework to real-world situations, many CTE programs allow students to earn college credit while fulfilling high school graduation requirements.

The end result is that more Arkansans are buying into the benefits of CTE.

In the 2001-2002 school year, 28 percent of the state’s high school graduates had completed a CTE program. Last year, 32 percent earned their completer seal along with their high school diploma.

